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D. Amendments to the Drawings.

FIG. 7 has been amended to include the label “(BACKGROUND ART)”.

FIG. 8 has been amended to include the label “(BACKGROUND ART)”. In
5 addition, the reference sign “800” has been added.

FIG. 9 has been amended to include the label “(BACKGROUND ART)”.

FIG. 10 has been amended to include the label “(BACKGROUND ART)”.

FIG. 11 has been amended to include the label “(BACKGROUND ART)”.

FIG. 12 has been amended to include the label “(BACKGROUND ART)”.

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E. Remarks

Objections to Drawings

FIGS. 7-12 have been amended to address the stated objections. Replacement sheets are
5 submitted herewith.

Objections to Claims 6-14 and 16-19.

With respect to claim 6, Applicants believe that sufficient antecedent basis exists for the term “the upward contacts”. Claim 6 depends from claim 5. Claim 5 recites plural upward
10 contacts. In particular, claim 5 recites “a first conductive line and a second conductive line...” and “*each* conductive line having”... “an upward contact”. Because each conductive line has an upward contact, and there is more than one conductive line, there is more than one upward contact.

Applicants have amended claim 7 to address the objection. The claim now recites “the
15 downward contacts” and depends from claim 5. Claim 5 provides the antecedent basis for the term “downward contacts”.

Applicants have amended claim 8 to address the objection.

Applicants have amended claim 13 as suggested by the Examiner.

Applicants have amended claim 14 to address the objection.

20 With respect to claim 16, Applicants believe the sufficient antecedent basis is provided for the term “the upward contacts” for the same general reason as claim 6. Claim 16 recites “forming two conductive lines”... “*each* conductive line having an upward contact”. Because each conductive line has an upward contact, and there is more than one conductive line, there is more than one upward contact.

25 Applicants have amended claim 17 as suggested by the Examiner.

Applicants have amended claim 19 as suggested by the Examiner.

Rejection of Claims 8-20 Under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) or (b) based on Applicants’ Background Art (hereinafter the BACKGROUND ART).

30 The rejection of claims 8-14 will first be addressed.

The invention of claim 8 is directed to a mask identification code circuit that includes n mask identification (ID) bit circuits that each provide one bit of a mask identification code,

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where n is an integer greater than 1, and the mask ID bit circuits are configurable to provide more than n different mask identification codes.

As is well established, anticipation requires the presence of a single prior art reference disclosure of each and every element of the claimed invention, arranged as in the claim. There must be no difference between the claimed invention and the reference disclosure, as viewed by a person of ordinary skill in the field of the invention.¹

To show Applicants claim 8 limitations, the rejection relies on Applicants BACKGROUND ART:

As per claims 8, 14, all elements of the claims are described in... Applicant's specification, page 2, lines 3-13 which are illustrated in Figure 7... since each bit can have a value of "0" or "1", the combination of n -bits ($SA_0...SA_n$) would inherently provide for 2^n different or unique values for mask identification codes. (Office Action, dated 09/21/2005, Page 4, Last two lines, Page 5, Line 7).

Applicants understand that any n -bit binary value can provide 2^n different binary numbers. However, this is not the case for conventional mask revision codes as described in Applicants' BACKGROUND ART. This is explained in the BACKGROUND ART of Applicants' Specification:

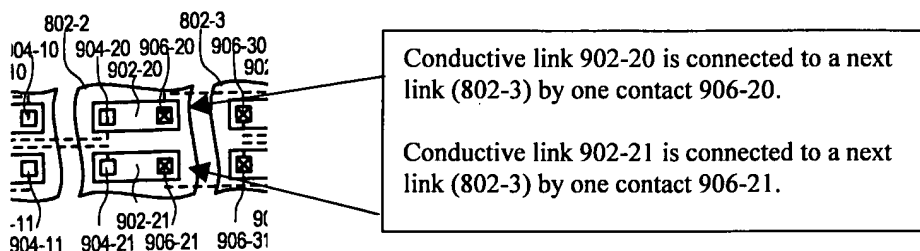
A drawback to conventional approaches, such as that described above, can be the limited number of mask revisions that may be expressed for a given set of mask bit ID circuits. *In particular, for n mask ID bits, only n mask revisions may be expressed.* Such a limitation can exist because once a change is made to a mask ID bit, the bit value may not be changed back unless the same mask layer is changed. (Applicants' Specification, Page 4, Lines 19-24).

Accordingly, because the described conventional approach shows the ability to express only n mask revisions from n mask ID bits, such teachings do not show, and are not believed to suggest Applicants' claim 8 limitations.

For this reason, this ground for rejection is traversed.

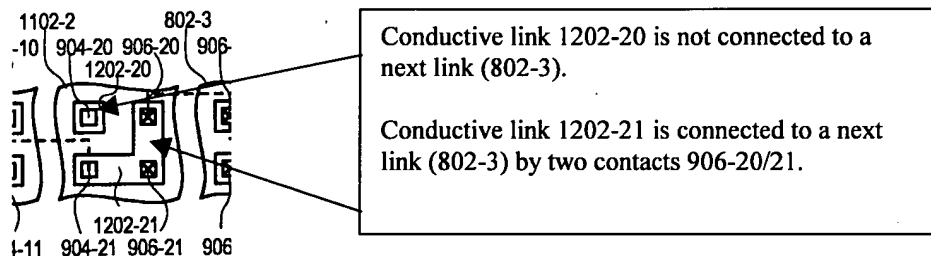
Amended claim 13, which indirectly depends from claim 8, recites each link of a mask identification circuit switches a potential supplied to a sense node when switched between configurations, each link including two conductive lines that are each coupled to a next link toward the sense node by only one contact in both a first and second configuration.

5 In the arrangement of the BACKGROUND ART, in one configuration, the conductive lines of a link are coupled to a next link by one contact:



However, in a second configuration, one conductive line is connected to the next link by two contacts, while the other conductive line is not connected to the next link at all.

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Accordingly, Applicants believe that amended claim 13 recites limitations not shown in the BACKGROUND ART.

15 Claim 14, which depends from claim 8, recites that the mask ID bit circuits are configurable to provide 2^n different mask identification codes with any combination of mask layer revisions.

To address this ground for rejection, Applicants incorporate by reference herein the comments set forth above for claim 8. In particular, that the embodiments show an arrangement
20 in which n mask ID bit circuits provide no more than n mask revision codes.

The rejection of claims 15-20 will now be addressed.

¹ Scripps Clinic & Research Found. v. Genetech Inc., 18 USPQ 2d 1001, 1010 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

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The invention of amended claim 15 is directed to a method for identifying integrated circuit masks. The method includes forming mask bit identification (ID) circuits having interconnected links on a plurality of integrated circuit layers that provide a signal path to a sense node, each link being switchable between at least two configurations, and switching more than one link of a mask bit ID circuit from one configuration to another to represent multiple mask changes.

To address this ground for rejection, Applicant incorporates by reference the same general comments set forth above for claim 8. That is, for a given mask bit ID circuit, a mask change can be represented only by a change to one link in the mask bit ID circuit. This is explained in the above excerpted portion of the BACKGROUND ART.

[O]nce a change is made to a mask ID bit, the bit value may not be changed back unless the same mask layer is changed. (Applicants' Specification, Page 4, Lines 21-24).

Looked at in another way, and with reference to FIG. 11, changing one link in the conventional mask bit ID circuit would change a resulting mask ID bit (SAn) from a "0" (VGND) to a "1" (VPWR). However, changing any other link would never change the mask ID back to "0". Thus, the conventional approach illustrates an arrangement in which switching more than one link within a same mask bit ID circuit from one configuration to another would represent only one mask change, and thus cannot show all the limitations of amended claim 15.

For this reason, Applicants believe the rejection of claim 15 is traversed.

Claim 16 is believed to be separately patentable over the cited reference.

Claim 16 recites that forming interconnected links includes forming two conductive lines for each link, each conductive line having an upward contact and a downward contact, the upward contacts of the two conductive lines being essentially diagonal to one another, the downward contacts of the two conductive lines being essentially diagonal to one another.

The BACKGROUND ART includes three figures that show contacts. FIGS. 9, 10 and 12. In each case, upward contacts and downward contacts are not diagonal to one another, but rather aligned with one another. FIG. 8 shows a conventional mask ID circuit, but this figure does not describe any contacts, let alone upward and downward contacts, as set forth in claim 16.

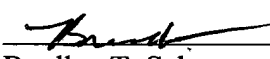
For all of these reasons, this ground for rejection is traversed.

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Claims 7-8, 13-14, 17 and 19, have been amended. Claims 7-8, 14, 17 and 19 have been amended, not in response to the cited art, but to address claim objections and to clarify claim terms.

5 The present claims 1-21 are believed to be in allowable form. It is respectfully requested that the application be forwarded for allowance and issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

10  12/16/05
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